THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There is no specific International Youth Satellite Scheme for Africa.

(c) and (d) The cost of establishing the Pan-African Network for e-connectivity to African countries, as announced by the President of India, has been provisionally estimated to be around US$50 million. It is also expected that the setting up of the network would be done in a phased manner in partnership with the African countries in a period of around 24 months from the date of commencement of the project.

New technology for rural areas

358. SHRI R.K. ANAND: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that US and UK are in the process of implementing a new technology which allows television, phone and data transfer in a single network;

(b) whether it is a fact that TRAI is willing to push this technology as the most preferred one for rural areas; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) have reported that they follow a technology neutral approach and have carried out a consultation process for promoting telecommunication services in rural areas.

Introduction of cheaper local landline call charges

359. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to introduce cheaper local landline call charges and mobile roaming charges;